

# **Town of Colchester**

## **Social Media Policy**

### **I. Purpose**

This policy establishes guidelines for the creation and use by the Town of Colchester, CT, its departments, boards, commissions, Appointed and Elected Officials and employees of the Town's social media sites for Work Related Purposes as a means of conveying Town information to its citizens.

The intended purpose behind establishing social media sites is to disseminate information from the Town, about the Town, to its citizens.

The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in how it is represented on the Town's social media sites.

Government agencies, officials and employees are held to a higher standard and this applies to social media as it would in any other town business.

The town recognizes social media has a direct connection to freedom of speech. This policy is intended to respect the first amendment and to provide guidance for appropriate administration.

For purposes of this policy, "Social Media" is understood to be content, including but not limited to social networks, blogs, picture and video sharing, podcasts, wikis, wall postings, message boards and online forums, published on the Internet. Examples of Social Media sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Flickr.

### **II. General Policy**

A. The establishment and use by any Town department, division, appointed or elected official, or employee of Town Social Media sites are subject to approval by the Board of Selectmen or its designees and the Town's Information Technology Department. Town Social Media sites shall be administered and monitored by individual department site administrators approved by the individual department heads, with notification to the Town's IT staff and the First Selectman.

B. Town Social Media sites shall make clear that they are maintained by the Town and that they follow the Town's Social Media Policy.

C. Wherever possible, Town Social Media sites should link back to the official Town website or department web pages for forms, documents, online services, and other information necessary to conduct business with the Town.

D. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable laws, rules, regulations or policies. Any Content removed based on this Social Media Policy will be e-mailed to the department supervisor along with

information about the section of the policy that was violated, time, date, and identity of the violator.

E. This Social Media Policy must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink at [www.ColchesterCT.gov/SocialMedia](http://www.ColchesterCT.gov/SocialMedia)

F. The Town will utilize social media tools as consistently as possible, enterprise wide.

G. The Town's website at [www.ColchesterCT.gov](http://www.ColchesterCT.gov) will remain the Town's primary internet presence.

H. All Town Social Media pages shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations and policies.

I. Town Social Media sites are subject to Connecticut public records and record retention laws, rules, regulations and policies. Any Content maintained in a Social Media format that is related to Town business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure. The department site administrator will maintain records in accordance with Connecticut public records and record retention laws, rules, regulations and policies.

J. This Social Media Policy may be updated from time to time and amended at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen.

### **III. Content Policy.**

A. As a public entity, the Town should abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.

B. If there has been no content added within 90 days or there is a lack of administration, the page will be removed.

C. Content perceived as inappropriate shall not be permitted on Town Social Media sites and is subject to removal and/or restriction by site administrators. Examples of inappropriate content are:

1. Content not related to the original topic or Town business
2. Random or unintelligible comments
3. Profane, obscene, offensive, violent or pornographic content and/or language
4. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination of any kind
5. Defamatory or personal attacks
6. Threats to any person or organization

7. Content in support of, or opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot item
8. Solicitation of commerce of any kind
9. Conduct in violation of any federal, state, or local law, rule or regulation
10. Encouragement of illegal activity
12. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
12. Content that violates a legal ownership interest
13. Content that could be interpreted as hate speech
14. Content that is not public under the freedom of information
15. Any other content deemed inappropriate by the Town

D. Content posted by a member of the public on any Town Social Media site shall be the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of content does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Town, nor does such content necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Town.

E. The Town reserves the right to deny access to Town Social Media sites to any person who violates the Town's Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.

F. Site administrators shall monitor Town Social Media sites for Content requesting responses from the Town. Site administrators may direct such requests to the appropriate Town department for response.

G. Site administrators shall monitor Content posted on Town Social Media sites for Content in violation of this Social Media Policy.

H. When a Town employee responds to a comment, in his/her Town capacity as a Town employee, the employee should do so in the name of the Town department, and the employee shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other Town employees except as required for Town business.

I. Content posted to any Town Social Media site must comply with that site's terms and conditions, and the Town reserves the right to report any violation of those terms to the site administrator so the site administrator may take appropriate and reasonable responsive action.

J. Appointed and Elected Officials and Employees posting to Social Media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Town in accordance with all Town rules, regulations and policies.

K. If possible, the public should be limited to only respond to posts made by the Town and not create their own threads.

L. Social Media administrators are not to debate or provide lengthy responses. If the explanation is in excess of one sentence, then refer to the appropriate person to discuss.

M. While employees may engage in any lawful activities through social media (including exercising any rights they may have to engage in protected concerted activity or political activities), any employee who chooses to use social media should be aware of the following Town policies in this regard:

- a. Any conduct, which under the law or Town policy is impermissible if expressed in any other form, is impermissible if expressed through social media.
- b. Appointed and Elected Officials and Employees are held responsible for their own content expressed through social media and will be expected to communicate in a professional and lawful manner at all times.
- c. The personal use of social media is not allowed during working time, regardless of the equipment used (e.g., either using personal or Town phones or computers). Employees may further not use Town equipment for personal reasons in accordance with applicable policies.
- d. Appointed and Elected Officials and Employees who use social media shall not post any proprietary Town data, documents or photographs or any information which would violate any privacy laws applicable to the Town, regardless of whether the posting is done during working or non-working time. Any information that cannot be disclosed through a conversation, a memo or an e-mail also cannot be disclosed through social media.
- e. Unless authorized in writing by their immediate supervisor and/or the First Selectman (such as when an Employee's job is to send public messages on behalf of the Town), Employees do not have permission to speak on behalf of the Town via social media.
- f. While communicating through social media, if an employee posts any content that has something to do with the work they perform for the Town or subjects associated with the business of the Town, employees must make clear that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Town by accompanying their posts with a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the Town's positions or opinions."

When an employee's use of any social media violates the law or any Town policies (including policies pertaining to employee misconduct or job performance), appropriate discipline up to and including termination of employment will be imposed, regardless of when the information was posted or sent and regardless of the tools or site used to post or send such information. Nothing in this policy (or any other Town policy) will be implemented or should be interpreted in any manner so as to prohibit or inhibit employees from engaging in any lawful activities through social media, including exercising any rights they may have to engage in protected concerted activity or political activities.